

Codes vs. Voluntary Programs or Vice Versa?

Prepared and Presented by
Jeffrey Forward, Richmond Energy Associates
Vermont Energy Code Project Coordinators

Key Points

- Code Vs. Voluntary Program Debate
- History of VT Code
- History of voluntary programs in VT
- VT experience with implementation
- What we are planning

What Codes Advocates Say About Voluntary Programs

- They get low participation
- Only reach free riders
- Expensive and mainstream builders won't pay for them
- Complicated and confusing
- Voluntary programs have too many politics

What Voluntary Program Advocates Say About Codes

- Codes are wimpy
- Codes do not address key issues such as mechanical ventilation and solar gain
- Tend to have a one size fits all approach
- Slow to be updated
- Complicated and confusing
- Codes have too many politics

What Is Good About a Code

- Level playing field
- Universally affect everyone so big potential for benefits
- Regulation creates concern
 - Fear motivates learning and changes behavior

What Is Good About Voluntary Programs

- Push the envelope
 - They can go beyond minimums
 - Know building science
- Advocate for higher standards
- Provide excellent builder support

History of VT Code

- Governor's Task Force
- Included most stakeholders
- Key part of strategy was inclusion of voluntary programs
 - Some wanted higher standard
 - Some wanted voluntary instead of mandatory

History of Voluntary Programs

- VT Star Homes Program
- Energy Rated Homes of Vermont
- EPA Energy Star Program



Vermont Implementation Experience

VT Star Homes Program

- First generation utility programs at best 20 - 25% participation
- Picked up co-sponsorship of workshops and conferences
- Offer code compliance support to builders
- Reaching over 50% of market for new connects

Profiting from Quality Builder Conferences

- Prior builder conferences 50 - 75
- First year attendance over 200
- Second year was down to 100+, but significant conflicts
- By partnering with VT Star, \$50,000 cost code project \$7,000

Cooperative Monitoring and Evaluation

- Baseline study
- Ventilation study
- Compliance study

Energy Rated Homes of Vermont

- Skeptical of code initially
- Picked up co-sponsorship of workshops and conferences
- Rating can be used to demonstrate compliance
- Offer code compliance support to builders
- Integral part of VT Star Homes program
- Performed over 100 ratings related to code compliance last year

HERS for Compliance

- 82 points on the rating scale
 - Policy of easier to meet code using rating
 - Good thing getting an energy efficiency professional into design
- Developing accreditation standards based on national NASEO/RESNET standards

Workshops

- Poor attendance at prior workshops
- Initial 6 code workshops sponsored through grant included dinner
- After initial series, lumberyards picked up sponsorship
 - Additional 18 at no cost to code program
 - Over 800 participants last year

Energy Star Homes

- Performance Pays Workshops
- NE HERS Alliance
- Plans to integrate with other states and other programs
- Tax credit proposal

Plans for the New Millennium

Code Update

- Will include ventilation standard
 - Publicize this process and the issues that drive it
 - Include broad array of stakeholders
- We want to parlay this into renewed interest in builder learning

Broaden Alliances to Region

- NE HERS Alliance
- Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships
- Multi-state codes grant
- Regional conference
 - EEBA
 - Affordable comfort
 - NY, NH, MA

Standardize Workshop Format and Outreach

- Performance pays workshops
- Highlight on ventilation
 - Telltale house
- Standardize builder guide to include both code and Energy Star info.
- Move toward Energy Star

Push/Pull Strategy

- Voluntary programs pull the market toward a higher standard
- Codes push the market toward voluntary programs
- Voluntary programs are partners in code promulgation and implementation
- Codes are a marketing opportunity for voluntary programs
- Voluntary programs better at building science
- Codes encourage builders to think about efficiency before they build